



THE LEGISLATURE
State of Hawaii

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
February 9, 2006

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Lawmakers Advance Keiki Care Plan Bill

Proposed law ensures basic health care coverage for all Hawaii children

Honolulu. The House Committee on Health today advanced House Bill 3116, Relating to the Hawaii Children's Health Care Program, a first of its kind public/private partnership to provide health care coverage of Hawaii's uninsured children. Known as the Keiki Care Plan, the program would provide free coverage to gap group kids from families that can't afford private insurance but make too much to qualify for QUEST, the state's insurance program for the poor. The Senate companion bill is Senate Bill 3259.

"One of the most important things we can do for our children's future is to give them a healthy start," said Representative Dennis Arakaki, chair of the Health Committee and co-convenor of the legislator's Keiki Caucus. "This will result in fewer health problems and lower health care costs as they grow to be adults, and the state will benefit in the long-term."

The legislation creates a temporary 3-year children's health care program in which the state would pay half the premiums to provide health care for uninsured children to a mutual benefit society, based on a model by the Hawaii Medical Service Association (HMSA).

(more)

"Ensuring access to health care – especially for children – is fundamental to HMSA's mission of improving the health and wellness of our community," said Gwen Miyasato, HMSA executive vice president. "Hawaii's Keiki Care Program is an investment in the future health of our community, and I applaud the legislative leadership for their vision to protect one of Hawaii's most vulnerable populations."

The Hawaii Health Care Task Force estimated that 8,000 Hawaii keiki are uninsured and fall into the gap group. Recently, the federal government announced an increase in funding that would allow the state to expand health coverage for low-income families through its QUEST program.

"Both programs are needed. While this will reduce the number of uninsured children, the goal of the Keiki Care Plan is to reach 100% coverage and to safeguard against children falling through the cracks," said Rep. Josh Green, a member of the task force. "If passed into law, Hawaii would be the first state in the country to insure all of its children."

The Keiki Care plan will cover preventive services, immunizations, doctor visits, diagnostic tests, emergency care, dental services and mental health benefits. The plan also provides limited coverage for prescription drugs.

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